

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 098233
ORIGIN EA-06

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY
CINCPAC HONOLULU HAWAII PRIORITY 0134

S E C R E T STATE 098233

LIMDIS - CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1 AND 3

TAGS: MARR, AS

SUBJECT: INDIAN OCEAN CONSULTATIONS WITH AUSTRALIANS

1. US-AUSTRALIAN CONSULTATIONS REGARDING THE US-USSR
INDIAN OCEAN ARMS LIMITATIONS TALKS WERE HELD IN
WASHINGTON APRIL 11-14. AUSTRALIAN SIDE WAS CHAIRED
BY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM PRITCHETT AND
US SIDE BY PM DIRECTOR LES GELB. BOTH SIDES REGARDED
THE TALKS AS EXTREMELY USEFUL IN CLEARING UP MISUNDER-
STANDINGS AND CONFUSIONS AND PROBING DEEPLY INTO AD-
VANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF PARTICULAR OPTIONS AS
WELL AS TOTAL STRUCTURE OF AN AGREEMENT. AT THE SAME
TIME, AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION CLEARLY RETAINED SOME
MEASURE OF CONCERN OVER HOW AN AGREEMENT MIGHT AFFECT

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PAGE 02 STATE 098233

ANZUS TREATY AND US ABILITY TO ACT WITH AUSTRALIA IN
ROUTINE WAYS (SUCH AS EXERCISES) IN ADDITION TO AN
ACTUAL EMERGENCY. AUSTRALIANS ALSO EMPHASIZED POLITICAL
ASPECTS (PERCEPTIONS WITHIN AUSTRALIA) AS WELL AS
SUBSTANTIVE PROBLEMS. DELEGATION WILL PREPARE REPORT
FOR DEFENSE COMMITTEE WHICH WILL LEAD TO OFFICIAL
HIGH LEVEL RESPONSE IN DUE COURSE. DETAILED ACCOUNTS

OF TALKS ARE BEING PREPARED AND WILL BE POUCHED THIS WEEK. SUMMARY DESCRIPTION FOLLOWS:

2. APRIL 11 MEETINGS. MORNING WAS DEVOTED TO GENERAL STATEMENTS BY BOTH SIDES. GELB STRESSED THAT US-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONSHIP WAS OF MORE IMPORTANCE TO US THAN ANY AGREEMENT WITH SOVIETS. WE BELIEVED ARMS LIMITATION AGREEMENT WITH SOVIETS WAS POSSIBLE WHICH WOULD NOT BE INJURIOUS TO AUSTRALIA AND WHICH COULD FREEZE EXISTING LEVELS OF US AND SOVIET FORCES IN MANNER FAVORABLE TO US. IF THAT WERE NOT POSSIBLE, AGREEMENT SHOULD NOT BE SIGNED. HOLBROOKE SAID THAT AGREEMENT WAS BEING PURSUED ON ASSUMPTION THAT IT WOULD NOT REFLECT ADVERSELY ON ASIA-PACIFIC BALANCE AND IF THAT WERE NOT THE CASE, US WOULD RE-EVALUATE ITS POSITION. PRITCHETT EXPRESSED PARTICULAR CONCERN THAT A US AGREEMENT WITH SOVIETS WOULD BE SEEN AS AT LEAST SOME ENCUMBRANCE ON ANZUS TREATY, PARTICULARLY IN MARGINAL SITUATIONS NOT SUFFICIENT TO INVOKE SUPREME INTEREST CLAUSE. HE ALSO RETURNED REPEATEDLY TO POINT THAT US POSITION, IN HIS VIEW, WAS OVERLY DIRECTED AT GREAT POWER CONFRONTATIONS AND COULD INHIBIT US ABILITY TO DEAL WITH CRISES INSPIRED BY THIRD COUNTRIES. WE REFUTED THESE POINTS.

3. AFTERNOON WAS DEVOTED TO DETAILED US PRESENTATION
SECRET

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PAGE 03 STATE 098233

TIONS ON ALL ASPECTS OF AN AGREEMENT (TRANSIT, SURFACE SHIPS, SUBMARINES, FACILITIES, DEFINITION OF AREA, ETC.) WITH AUSTRALIANS ASKING PENETRATING QUESTIONS ON EVERY POINT.

4. APRIL 12 MEETINGS COVERED LAND BASED STRIKE AIRCRAFT (LBSA) QUESTION INCLUDING DETAILED EXAMINATION OF OPTIONS AND DISCUSSION OF US OBJECTIVE IN FREEZING SITUATION WHEREBY SOVIETS COULD NOT INTRODUCE LBSA AT ALL WHILE WE COULD DO SO TO SOME DEGREE (BASED ON PAST PATTERNS) AND MOREOVER HAD ADVANTAGE OF CARRIER DEPLOYMENTS IN CONTRAST TO SOVIETS. AUSTRALIANS APPEARED NEGATIVE ON APPLICATION OF LBSA TO AUSTRALIA. THEY AGREED, HOWEVER, TO CONTINUE TO STUDY US OPTIONS AND ASKED FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM US SIDE TO BE PRESENTED IN DUE COURSE.

5. IN SUMMARY SESSION ON APRIL 14, AUSTRALIANS ASKED NUMEROUS DETAILED QUESTIONS AGAIN AND EXPRESSED MANY OF SAME OVERALL CONCERNS. THEY ALSO EMPHASIZED THEIR INTEREST IN CONDUCTING EXERCISES OFF WEST COAST OF AUSTRALIA INCLUDING AN EXERCISE THIS YEAR. THIS LAST

POINT HAS THE EXPLICIT SUPPORT OF PRIME MINISTER FRASER.
GELB SAID WE WOULD EXAMINE THIS PROPOSAL. IN CLOSING,

PRITCHETT EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR THESE DISCUSSIONS
AND ASKED FOR CONTINUATION OF DIALOGUE INCLUDING
SPECIFIC PROPOSAL TO SEND US TEAM TO CANBERRA AT
SOME POINT. THIS WOULD HAVE SPECIAL VALUE AS DEMON-
STRATION TO AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THOSE
CRITICAL OF AN AGREEMENT, THAT US WAS CONSULTING CLOSELY
WITH GOA. CHRISTOPHER

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